

## European buyer requirement: quality standards for herbs and spices

### In brief

The European Spice Association, ESA, has set up quality minima (QM), establishing requirements on the minimum quality for spices entering the EU market. In some respects, the quality minima are additional to legislation, in other respects, they further define legal requirements. ESA recommends all members to enforce the quality minima.



### Market impact

The ESA QM have a large market impact in the EU. ESA represents approximately 85% of the EU market. The members are recommended to use the ESA QM. However, a large part of the ESA members have their own additional requirements, with even more detailed specifications.

### Content

The ESA QM describes the quality minima for dried herbs and spices, which should be demanded by buyers when these products are purchased for use within the EU. ESA QM are based on legal requirements, including the General Food Law, food labelling, organic production, contaminants, ionising radiation, irradiation and maximum residue levels (MRLs) of pesticides.

➔ [For more information](#) on legal requirements in the ESA QM, please see the related documents.

For each subject covered in the ESA QM, the requirement or reference to the source of requirement is given. In cases where this is not specified, it is stated that the issue should be agreed upon between the buyer and seller.

Subjects include in the ESA QM:

#### *Chemical/physical analysis*

In this section, the following subjects are addressed: ash, acid insoluble ash, moisture, volatile oil, water activity, bulk density and microbiology (salmonella, yeast&moulds and E Coli).

#### *Contaminants/residues*

These include pesticides, heavy metals, mycotoxins and treatments. The references include EU legislation and, in absence of these (regarding certain pesticides), Codex Alimentarius.

#### *Purity*

Purity criteria are set regarding species, adulteration, infestation, extraneous matter and foreign matter.

#### *Sensory properties*

It is stated that herbs and spices must be free from off odour or off flavour.

#### *Packaging*

The packaging must not be a source of contamination, should be food grade and must protect the product quality during transportaion and storage.

➔ [For the complete ESA QM document](#), please see the external link.

### Monitoring

ESA QM are voluntary and there is no monitoring other than companies' own monitoring.

### **Organisation**

The European Spice Association, ESA, is the umbrella organisation of the European spice industry. Members of ESA are the national federations of the spice industry in the member countries of the European Union, Switzerland and Turkey.

➔ [For more information](#) on the ESA, please refer to the external link.

*Last update: October 2009*